

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for operating an internal combustion engine, in which a quantity of fuel arriving in a combustion chamber (22) is a function of a triggering (67) of a piezo actuator (30) of a fuel injector (20), whose triggering energy (dU2) is made available by a buffer store (58),
wherein at least intermittently, potential difference (dU1) of the buffer store (58) resulting in response to a triggering (67) of the piezo actuator (30) is ascertained at least approximately (70, 72) and used for a comparison to at least one limiting value (76, 80).

2. The method as recited in one of the preceding claims,
wherein an electrical energy, with which the buffer store (58) is charged between the moments of ascertaining its potential, is determined and is taken into account (72) when ascertaining a charge (dU2) actually exchanged between the piezo actuator (30) and the buffer store (58).

3. The method as recited in Claim 2,
wherein the energy with which the buffer store (58) is charged is added to or subtracted from (72) the recorded potential difference (dU1), and the addition result (dU2) or the subtraction result is used for the comparison (76, 80) to the at least one limiting value.

4. The method as recited in one of Claims 2 or 3,
wherein the energy with which the buffer store (58) is charged is estimated with reference to a program map (74), into which is fed a supply current and a time duration between the two ascertainments of the potential of the buffer store (58).

5. The method as recited in Claim 1,
wherein a charging of the buffer store is deactivated for determining the potential difference of the buffer store.

6. The method as recited in one of the preceding claims,

wherein when the potential difference (dU2) of the piezo actuator (30) is equal to or greater than a first limiting value, an error entry is made corresponding to a short circuit and/or a corresponding action is initiated.(78).

5 7. The method as recited in Claim 6,
wherein when the potential difference (dU2) of the piezo actuator (30) is equal to or less than the first limiting value and equal to or less than a second limiting value, an error entry is made corresponding to a load drop and/or a corresponding action is initiated (82).

10

8. A computer program,
wherein it is suitable for implementing the method as recited in one of the preceding claims when it is executed on a computer.

15

9. The computer program as recited in Claim 8,
wherein it is stored in a memory, in particular in a flash memory.

10. A control and/or regulating device (24) for operating an internal combustion
20 engine,
wherein it includes a memory in which a computer program as recited in one of Claims 8 or 9 is stored.

11. The internal combustion engine as recited in Claim 10,
25 wherein it includes a control and/or regulating device (24) as recited in Claim 10.